

Amendments to the Drawings:

All amendments to the drawings are submitted on the replacement sheet(s) attached to this amendment. Each replacement sheet includes all figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is amended. A marked-up copy of each replacement sheet is included after the last replacement sheet. Each marked-up sheet is labeled as "Annotated Marked-up Drawings."

A detailed description of each drawing amendment is as follows:

Changes to Figure 4A: Reference numeral 42a has been added.

Changes to Figure 4B: Reference numeral 42a has been added.

Changes to Figure 5A: Reference numeral 42a has been added.

Changes to Figure 5B: Reference numeral 42a has been added.

REMARKS

The above amendments and these remarks are responsive to the Office action dated October 20, 2004. In the Office action, the drawings were objected to as failing to comply with 37 C.F.R. 1.84(p)(5), claims 4-7 were objected to because of informalities, claims 4-7 and 15-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112 as being indefinite, claims 1-4, 6, 8-16 and 18-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) based on U.S. Pat. No. 6,478,355 to Van Eden et al., and claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,398,291 to Reusswig et al. Applicant thanks the Examiner for the careful consideration of the application. Applicant traverses the rejections, but nevertheless amends the claims as shown above. In view of the amendments above, and the remarks below, applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111 and allowance of the pending claims.

Claims 1-3

Claims 1-3 are cancelled without prejudice.

Claim 4

Claim 4 has been amended to recite "a stationary bottom plate that extends forward to underneath the rearmost seat." Applicants believe this amendment addresses the Examiner's objections under Section 112 to claim 4 and its dependent claims.

Claim 4 has been amended to recite that "the surrounding panel assembly includes stationary side panels provided along opposing side perimeters of the bottom plate and an extendable portion," and to recite that "the extendable portion is configured to be extendable forward to reach into the space formerly occupied by the seat." Two examples of a configuration with stationary side panels 26 and extendable portions 21 are shown in Figs. 6 and 7, reproduced below.

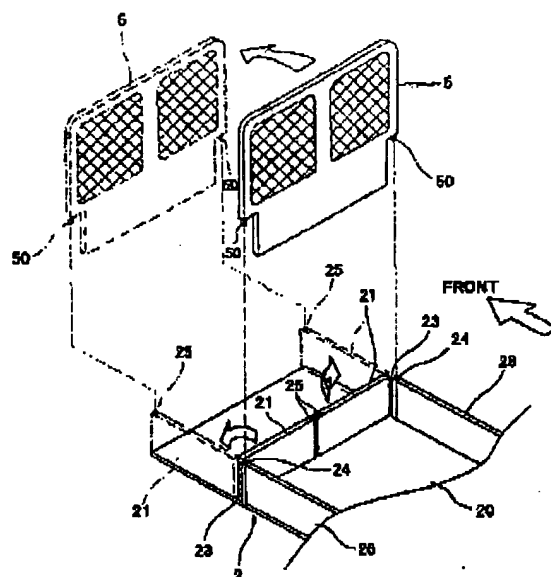


Fig. 6 of the Subject Application

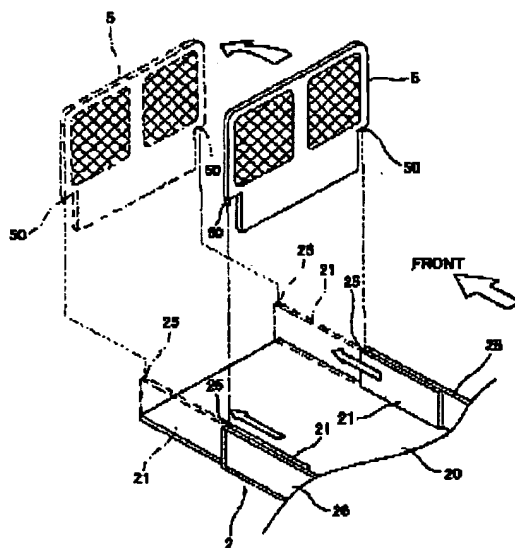


Fig. 7 of the Subject Application

In contrast, Van Eden discloses a cargo bed in which the entire cargo bed appears to move as unit, as shown in Fig. 3B reproduced below.

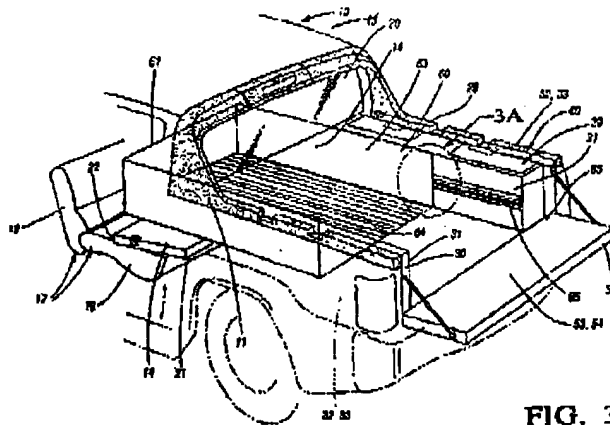


FIG. 3B

Fig. 3B of Van Eden

Applicants respectfully submit that Van Eden fails to disclose or suggest the claimed stationary side panels and extendable portion, in combination with the remaining features recited in amended claim 4. Therefore applicants believe that claim 4 is allowable.

Claim 5

Amended claim 5 depends from claim 4, and is believed allowable. Original claim 5, which was indicated as allowable, has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 28.

Claim 6

Claim 6 depends from claim 4, and has been amended to recite that the extendable portion is slidable. One example of such a configuration is shown in Fig. 7, reproduced above. Applicants therefore believe that claim 6 is allowable.

Claim 7

Original claim 7, which was indicated as allowable, is cancelled without prejudice and rewritten in independent form as claim 29.

Claims 8-13

Claims 8-13 are cancelled without prejudice.

Claim 14

Claim 14 has been amended to recite a cargo bed having an upper bottom plate and a lower bottom plate, "wherein the upper bottom plate is slidable on the lower bottom plate from an overhang configuration, in which a forward end portion of the upper bottom plate is positioned behind the seat and a rear end portion thereof overhangs a rear wheel of the vehicle to a greater extent when the seat is in the deployed configuration, to a compact configuration, in which the forward end portion of the upper bottom plate is positioned in a space formerly occupied by the seat in the deployed configuration and the rear end portion of the upper bottom plate overhangs the rear wheels of the vehicle to a lesser extent than in the overhang configuration when the seat is in the stowed configuration." One example of such a configuration is shown in Figs. 3A and 3B, reproduced below.

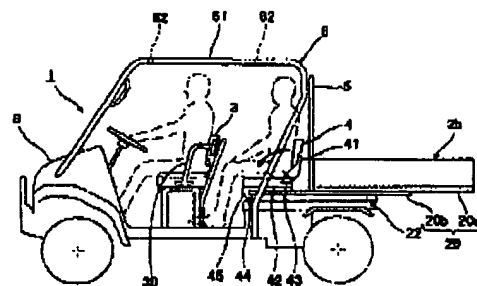


FIG. 3A

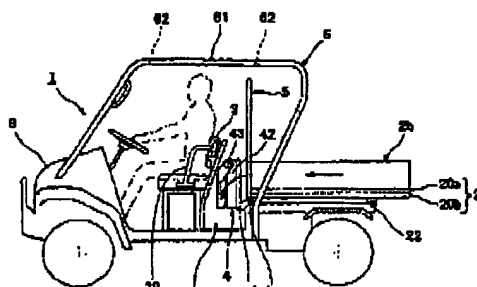


FIG. 3B

Figs. 3A and 3B of the Subject Application

In contrast, in Fig. 21, reproduced below, Van Eden discloses a cargo bed that ~~appears~~ only to extend rearward. Further, the configuration shown in Fig. 3B of Van Eden ~~does not~~ disclose that the moveable cargo bed may overhang (extend rearward of) the rear wheels ~~when~~ the cargo bed is moved forward into the cab of the vehicle.

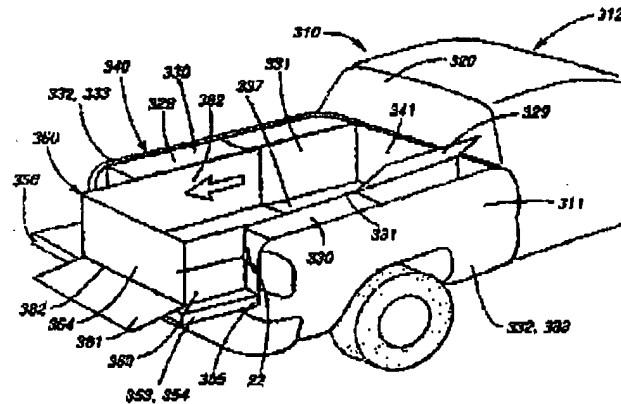


FIG. 21

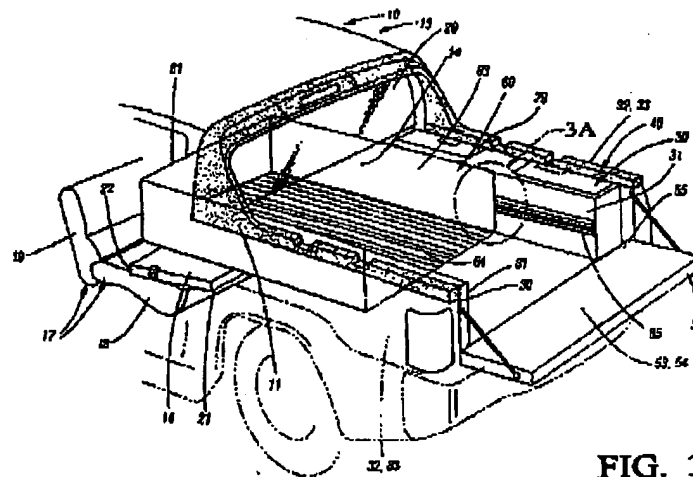


FIG. 3B

Further, Van Eden does not disclose an upper bottom plate that includes a “surrounding panel assembly,” as claimed. By providing the surrounding panel assembly on the slidable upper bottom plate, the upper part of the cargo bed may be configured to be slidable as a unit, as

described in the specification at Page 7, Lines 2-3, and illustrated in Figs. 3A and 3B. As described at Page 8, lines 1-2 of the Specification, moving the whole upper part of the cargo bed as a unit enables the cargo bed to be transitioned between the compact and overhang configurations without requiring a change in the cargo space.

In addition, Van Eden does not disclose a vehicle capable of both the movements of Fig. 21 and Fig. 3B. Even if the teachings of Figs. 3B and 21 were combined (and no mechanism is disclosed or suggested by Van Eden for doing so), it would require two step operation, i.e., pulling out and pushing in of the cargo bed. On the other hand, applicants have provided a mechanism (as shown in Figs. 3A and 3B) which requires only one movement to transition the cargo bed between the overhang configuration and the compact configuration.

In view of the above, applicants respectfully submit that Van Eden fails to disclose "a compact configuration in which the forward end portion of the upper bottom plate is positioned in a space formerly occupied by the seat in the deployed configuration and the rear end portion of the upper bottom plate overhangs the rear wheels of the vehicle to a lesser extent than in the overhang configuration when the seat is in the stowed configuration." For these reasons, applicants believe that claim 14 is allowable.

Claims 15-16

Claims 15-16 are cancelled without prejudice.

Claim 17

Claim 17 is cancelled without prejudice. New claim 27 is based on original claim 17, and also recites additional features of the folding seat.

Claims 18-20

Claims 18-20 are cancelled without prejudice.

New Claims 21-29

Applicants present new claims 21-29 directed to additional features of the disclosed embodiments. Claims 21-29 are also believed allowable.

Applicants believe that this application is now in condition for allowance, in view of the above amendments and remarks. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowability covering the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

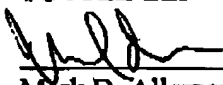
I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to the USPTO or deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail, postage prepaid, to: Mail Stop AMENDMENT, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 on February 22, 2005.



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Respectfully submitted,

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